

Satan Sanderson

By HALLIE
ERMINIE RIVES,
Author of
"Hearts Courageous," Etc.
COPYRIGHT, 1908, THE BOBBS-
MERRILL COMPANY

Circumstantially speaking, the evidence was flawless. Dr. Moreau, while little known and less liked, had figured in the town as a promoter and an inventor of "slick" stock schemes. He had come there with Hugh Stires from Sacramento, where they had had a business partnership of short duration. There had been bad blood between them there, as the latter had once admitted. The prisoner had pre-empted the claim on Smoky mountain in an abortive "boom" which Moreau had engineered, and over whose proceeds the pair, it was believed, had fallen out. He had then, to use the attorney's phrase, "swapped the devil for the witch" and had taken up with Prendergast, who by the manner of his taking off had finally justified a jail record in another state. Soon after this break Hugh Stires had vanished. On the day following his last appearance in the town the body of Moreau had been found on the Little Paymaster claim shot by a cowardly bullet through the back, a fact which precluded the possibility that the deed had been done in self defense. There was evidence that he had died a painful and lingering death. Suspicion had naturally pointed to the vanished man, and this suspicion had grown until, after some months' absence, he had returned, alleging that he had lost his memory of the past, to resume his life in the cabin on the mountain and his

would prefer not to open testimony till tomorrow." Felder had risen. He saw his opportunity—to bring out sharply a contrasting point in the prisoner's favor, the one circumstance, considered apart, pointing toward innocence rather than guilt; to leave this for the jury to take with them, to offset by its effect the weight of the evidence that had been given.

"I will proceed, if your honor pleases," he said and amid a rustle of surprise and interest called Jessica to the stand.

As she went forward to the witness chair she put back the shielding veil, and her face, pale as bramble bloom under her red bronzed hair, made an appealing picture. A cluster of white



"That man's name," he blazed, "is not Hugh Stires."

carinations was pinned to her coat, and as she passed Harry she bent and laid one in his hand. The slight act, not lost upon the spectators, called forth a sibilant flutter of sympathy, for it wore no touch of designed effect. Its impulse was as pure and unmistakable as its meaning.

Harry had started uncontrollably as she rose, for he had had no inkling of the lawyer's intention, and a flush darkened his cheek at the cool touch of the flower. But this faded to a settled pallor as under Felder's grave questioning she told in a voice as clear as a child's, yet with a woman's emotion struggling through it, the story of her disregarded warning. While she spoke pain and shame traveled through his every vein, for, though technically she had not brought herself into the perplexing purview of the law, she was laying bare the secret of her own heart, which now he would have covered at any cost.

"That is all, your honor," said Felder when Jessica had finished her story.

"Do you wish to cross examine?" asked the judge perfunctorily.

The prosecutor looked at her an instant. He saw the faintness in her eyes, the twitching of the gloved hand on the rail. "By no means," he said courteously and turned to his papers.

At the same moment as Jessica stepped into the open aisle the ironic chance created the spellbound audience to a novel sensation. Every electric light suddenly went out, and darkness swooped upon the town and the courtroom. Hubbub arose—people stood up in their places.

The judge's gavel pounded viciously, and his stentorian voice bellowed for order.

"Keep your seats, everybody," he commanded. "Mr. Clerk, get some candles. This court is not yet adjourned."

As the pall of darkness fell upon the courtroom it brought to Jessica a sense of premonition as though the incident prefigured the gloomy end. She turned sick and stumbled down the aisle, feeling that she must reach the outer air.

In the room Jessica had left the turmoil was simmering down. Here and there a match was struck and showed a circle of brightness. The glimmer of one of them lit the countenance of a man who had brushed her sleeve as he entered. It was Hallelujah Jones.

"Wait, wait!" he cried. "I have evidence to give!" He pointed excitedly toward Harry. "This man is not what you think. He is not!"

The judge's gavel thumped upon the wood. "How dare you," he vociferated, "break in on the deliberations of this court? I fine you \$20 for contempt."

Felder had leaped to his feet. What could this man know? He took a bill from his pocket and clapped it down on the clerk's desk.

"I beg to purge him of contempt," he said, "and call him as a witness."

Hallelujah Jones snatched the Bible from the clerk's hands and kissed it. Knowledge was burning his tongue. The jury were leaning forward in their seats.

"Have you ever seen the prisoner before?" asked Felder.

"Yes."

"When?"

"When he was a minister of the gospel."

Felder stared. The judge frowned. The jury looked at one another, and a laugh ran round the hushed room.

The merriment kindled the evangelist's distempered passion. Sudden anger flamed in him. He leaned forward and shook his hand vehemently at the table where Harry sat, his face as colorless as the flower he wore.

"That man's name," he blazed, "is not Hugh Stires. It is a cloak he has chosen to cover his shame. He is the Rev. Henry Sanderson of Aniston."

Harry's pulses had leaped with excitement when the street preacher's first exclamation startled the courtroom; now they were beating as though they must burst. Through the stir about him he heard the crisp voice of the district attorney:

"I ask your honor's permission before this extraordinary witness is examined further," he said caustically, "to read an item printed here which has a bearing upon the testimony." He held in his hand a newspaper which earlier in the afternoon, with cynical disregard of Felder's tactics, he had been casually perusing.

"Read it, sir."

Holding the newspaper to a candle, the lawyer read in an even voice, prefacing his reading with the journal's name and date:

This city, which was aroused in the night by the burning of St. James' chapel, will be greatly shocked to learn that its rector, the Rev. Henry Sanderson, who has been for some months on a prolonged vacation, was in the building at the time and now lies at the city hospital, suffering from injuries from which it is rumored there is grave doubt of his recovery.

In the titter that rippled the courtroom Harry felt his heart bound and swell. Under the succinct statement he clearly discerned the fact. He saw the pitfall into which Hugh had fallen—the trap into which he himself had sent him on that fatal errand with the ruby ring on his finger. "Grave doubt of his recovery!" A surge of relief swept over him to his finger tips. He would be free to go back—to be himself again, to be Jessica's—if Hugh died. The reading voice drummed in his ears:

The facts have not as yet been ascertained, but it seems clear that the popular young minister returned to town unexpectedly last night and was asleep in his study when the fire started. His presence in the building was unguessed until too late, and it was by little short of a miracle that he was brought out alive.

As we go to press we learn that Mr. Sanderson's condition is much more hopeful than was at first reported.

Harry's heart contracted as if a giant hand had clutched it. His elation fell like a rotten tree girdled at the roots. If Hugh did not die! He chilled as though in a spray of liquid air. Hugh's escape—the chance his conscience had given him—was cut off.

The judge reached for the newspaper the lawyer held, ran his eye over it and brought his gavel down with an angry snort.

"Take him away," he said. "His testimony is ordered stricken from the records. The fine is remitted. Mr. Felder, we can't make you responsible for lunatics. The court stands adjourned."

Felder had been among the last to leave the courtroom. He was discomfited and angry. At the door of the courthouse Dr. Brent slipped an arm through his.

"Too bad, Tom," he said sympathizingly. "I don't think you quite deserved it."

Felder paced a moment without speaking. "I need evidence," he said then; "anything that may help. I made a mistake. You heard all the testimony?"

The other nodded.

"What did you think of it?"

"What could any one think? I give all credit to your motive, Tom, but it's a pity you're mixed up in it."

"Why?"

"Because, if there's anything in human evidence, he's a thoroughly worthless reprobate. He lay for Moreau and murdered him in cold blood, and he ought to swing."

"The casual view," said the lawyer gloomily. "Just what I should have said myself—if this had happened a month ago."

His friend looked at him with an amused expression. "I begin to think he must be a remarkable man!" he said. "Is it possible he has really convinced you that he isn't guilty?"

Felder turned upon the doctor squarely. "Yes," he returned bluntly. "He has. Whatever I may have believed when I took this case, I have come to the conclusion—against all my professional instincts, mind you—that he never killed Moreau. I believe he's as innocent as either you or I!"

(To be continued.)

LIFE AND FIRE INSURANCE

Penn Mutual Life
Aetna Fire
Commercial Union Fire Co.

Insurance laws allow the companies sixty days in which to settle claims, but the companies I carry pay promptly on receiving proof of loss without any unnecessary delay.

J. H. Peeples, Agent

Office up stairs over State Bank

Holiday Rates

—VIA—

Atlantic Coast Line

TO ALL POINTS

South of the Ohio and Potomac
And East of the Mississippi Rivers

Tickets on Sale December 18, 19, 23, 24, 25, 30,
31 and January 1, with final limit to leave
destination not later than midnight
of January 6, '09

For tickets, reservations or information call on nearest Atlantic Coast Line Agent, or

J. W. Carr, T. P. A., Tampa, Fla. J. G. Kirkland, D. P. A.
T. C. White, G. P. A. Wilmington, N. C. W. J. Craig, P. T. M.

Famous Ancho Brand Dates

Fresh Nuts

Lenox Chocolates

Always Fresh

Bridges

Confectionery Store, Arcadia

Champion Business Bring...